

# *The Brooklyn Jewish Center Review*

THE JEWISH CONGRESS  
ELECTIONS

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS  
AND THE JEWS

PALESTINE AT THE WORLD'S  
FAIR

THE MARTYR AKIBA

WHEN DID "LIFE BEGIN"  
IN THE BIBLE ?

A NOTABLE ANNIVERSARY

JEWISH NEWS REVIEWED

MAY

1938

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# BROOKLYN JEWISH CENTER REVIEW

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## GERMANS TO WHOM WE CAN BE GRATEFUL

**I**N these days, when even in free and democratic America we see Germans who think more of Nazi dictatorship than of American liberty, it is good to know that there are Americans of German descent and German nationality who are worthy of the ideals of this, their adopted land. It is comforting to know that not all Americans of German stock are of the type who glory in the philosophy of brutality and hatred which distinguishes Nazism, but that there are many — aye the large majority, who take pride in the ideals of a Carl Schurtz, and who glory in the culture and learning that ruled in the Germany that was.

We in the Brooklyn Jewish Center want to pay tribute to one such German-American with whom we have become closely associated. When the news spread that the Center had established a Nazi-banned Library, this gentleman presented the library with a number of valuable books, written in German, which today could not ap-

pear upon the shelves of any library in Germany. Though not of our faith, and not even of this community, this man wanted us to know that he, a German by blood and race, nevertheless sympathized with all who suffered in Germany through the new regime.

Since that day, this gentleman has made frequent visits to the library, and never empty-handed. About one hundred volumes have already been presented by him, and every gift of books is accompanied by the gift of human sympathy that comes from a fine human heart. The Nazi-banned library of the Center has served its purpose well, not only because it has assembled all those books that were cast into the flames by Nazi bigotry, but because it has brought to us new courage and new faith from people of the German race who loath the new rule in Germany as intensely as it is loathed by the liberals of every nationality here and throughout the entire world.

—I. H. L.

## LOUIS COHEN — A TRIBUTE TO A VALUED COMMUNAL WORKER

**F**ATE brought to an end the fruitful life of Louis Cohen, one of the founders of our institution and the first President of the Brooklyn Jewish Center.

It was at his home, 1323 President Street, on December 29, 1918, that the first meeting was held at which plans were launched for the organization of a Center in our borough. His brother, the late Joseph H. Cohen, whom he greatly admired, had taken a leading part in the organization of the New York Jewish Center on West 86th Street, and he felt that our community, too, was ready for a similar institution.

After ten months, he turned over the presidency to Mr. Samuel Rottenberg, but remained for years one of the leading figures in the Center. He not only gave liberally but, in giving, he set a standard for others to follow. Born in this country, he combined in him the true religiosity of the orthodox Jew and the modernism of the Jew of the Western World. He was the gentlest of men, and whether one agreed with him or not one had to love him and admire him for his fine character, his goodness of heart and keen sense of humor.

He was sadly missed when he left Brooklyn to take up residence in Man-

hattan, where he served for a number of years as the President of the New York Center. In recognition of his great service to our Center he was elected an Honorary Trustee, which office he held until death took him away from us on May 23rd.

The Jewish communities of Brooklyn and New York have every reason to mourn the passing of Louis Cohen. He knew his responsibilities to the community and he discharged them nobly.

The members of the Brooklyn Jewish Center, in whose midst he spent many of the happiest days of his life, are deeply saddened by this loss. His memory will forever linger with us.

—J. G.

## A GRUESOME REPORT

**I**N the May 23rd issue of the *New York Times* there appeared a long article detailing the persecution of both Jews and Gentiles in Vienna when the Nazis annexed Austria. This is one of the most horrifying articles that has appeared in print, and those who wish to familiarize themselves with conditions existing in Austria during that period should make a point of reading it.

Here we can see how bestiality was brought out in a populace thought light-hearted, pleasure-loving and generous, and there comes over one a chilling feeling that such a phenomenon can take place in any country.

The power of propaganda is incalculable, and the production of mass hysteria a relatively simple operation.

—J. K.

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# THE JEWISH CONGRESS ELECTIONS

By LOUIS J. GRIBETZ

**A** PROMINENT British journalist who visited America last month appraised the world Jewish crisis. He said: "You may take it from me as a simple statement of fact that European Jewry has disappeared. Jewry as a community, as a body that means anything in a communal sense, has completely vanished. There is no longer a Jewry in Russia; there is no longer a Jewry in Germany; for all practical purposes there is no Jewry in Poland; the Jewry of Austria is disintegrating under your very eyes; tomorrow or the day after tomorrow the Jewish community of Rumania will be faced with disappearance, and so we can go through the whole map of Europe and you will see, what is now self-evident, that Jewry in Europe is doomed."

To American Israel he said: "For God's sake, take over the control of Jewry. Take over the leadership of Jewry and save what there is to be saved of our Jewish people."

This spectacle (not unreal or exaggerated) so held out to us is indeed most depressing and most humiliating. It torments the soul of every thinking Jew. The truth, however, cannot and should not be suppressed. Wherever our gaze turns we painfully witness the same sad, tragic condition—a dreary uniformity of sorrow and disaster. In unrelentless, continuous succession calamity follows calamity. In Russia spiritual and cultural Judaism is in utter stagnation, terrible decay. The Jews of Germany seem like a desolate valley of dry bones with no sign of life. Jewry in Hungary is a lifeless imitation of what it once was. Austrian Jewry is a pitiful mass—just so much prey and plunder to barbaric rapacity. Polish Jewry in want and despair, is defending her position with diminishing strength against fearful odds. Millions of our fellow Jews in other countries are groaning under insupportable burdens.

But out of the dark night there shines forth a morning star the luminous figure of America and American Jewry. Even as in the days of old, when the sun of Jewry set in the East it began to rise in the West. We are the largest, the most favorably situated Jewish community on earth. We constitute almost one-third of the entire

Jewish population on the surface of the globe. In this hour of distress we are the hope and refuge of all Jews elsewhere. We may consider ourselves the "remnant of Israel" to which our foreign kinsmen must look for light and leading. We are the "excellency of their strength, the desire of their eyes, the yearning of their soul."

We have at our disposal all the materials necessary for leadership and succor. We have the men and the means—the human and material resources—indispensable to help mend the broken life of Jewry.

Yea, more. We have the freedom. Freedom not the result of emancipation, freedom not the faint and sickly hot-house plant, but freedom that is the natural and thriving product of American civilization. Further, we have the sympathetic understanding and the respect of all America. America looks with shuddering horror on the bigotry and the fanaticism to which the Jew is subject. She looks with disdain and contempt upon those who insult the dignity of man. America is still in passionate quest of those things which sweeten the life of humanity with justice and equality.

In this hour, when the destiny of the Jewish people has been placed in our hands, the greatest need of all of us is Jewish solidarity—a united front in defense and furtherance of Jewish rights—the combined strength of the Jewish people to express their faith in justice and in the ideals of democracy and equality. To meet the demands of the hour, the whole American Jewish community must assert itself. Every individual must participate in the fulfillment of this duty. Our power, however, great as it is, will be ineffective through separation and disunity.

In order that American Jewry may express itself and declare its will—come face to face with solid facts and with its duty—a suitable agency must be created and employed. An instrumentality is required to be the authoritative voice and arm of the American Jewish people. It is maintained that in the American Jewish Congress such agency exists. It is the Congress which, during the past 25 years, has on many

occasions valiantly and successfully defended and promoted the interests of the Jewish people.

At the present moment, the American Jewish Congress, mindful of the special need that American Jewry act collectively, is conducting national elections for the purpose of choosing delegates to the Congress. These delegates, upon their election, will at an extraordinary conference consider the pressing problems facing Jewry in an attempt to solve them for the benefit of the Jewish people.

These elections are to be held on Saturday evening, June 25th, Sunday, June 26th, and Monday, June 27th, 1938. Registration certificates are now being distributed as a preliminary to the voting. Every Jew—man or woman—over the age of 18 years is eligible to vote in these elections. Indeed, it is urged that all of us are duty-bound to register and vote if we would be true to our people.

It is important to observe that these elections have the deepest meaning and concern for Jewry. This event is not an ordinary one. A strange sense of expectancy surrounds the choosing of these delegates.

The elections represent and symbolize democratic processes in all their strength, vitality and value. They exemplify and recall with vividness the proposition that Judaism is a democratic way of life. Throughout the ages the Jew neither was a devotee of, nor in his communal life was he governed by, wealth, birth or position. The Jewish community was a democratic community. In matters pertaining to the well-being of his group the Jew regulated his conduct according to the decision of the majority. Even among the learned—in religious and doctrinal matters—the minority deferred to the opinion of the majority.

These elections must reveal that Jewry has within itself all the elements it needs to sustain and develop itself. For the leadership it needs it does not have to go beyond its own people. Nor does it have to accept leadership as a favor or by way of charity. Too commonly, leadership has been furnished

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# CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS AND THE JEWS

By JACOB S. MINKIN

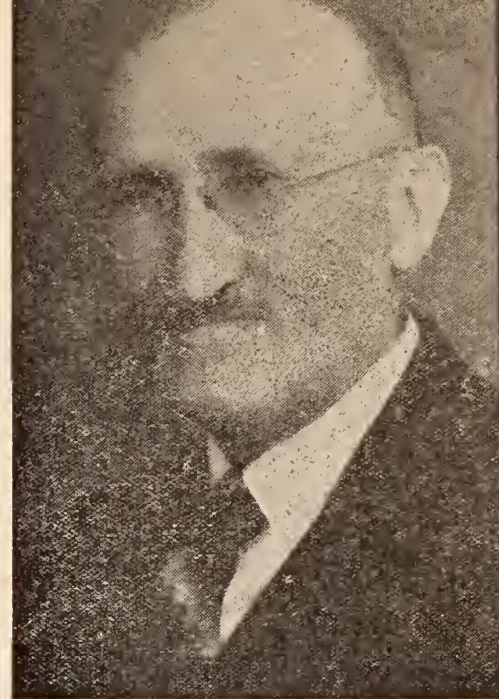
THE close of the fifteenth century found Spain more disturbingly enmeshed in the tangles of her Jewish problem than ever before. The anvil threatened to break the hammer. The heroic endurance of the persecuted exhausted both the patience and the ingenuity of the persecutors. In vain did Torquemada strive to bring about a complete separation between the Jews and the Marranos. His cruel, frantic efforts succeeded only in bringing them even closer together to reaffirm, in secret, their common loyalty to their ancestral heritage. Inevitably, therefore, he sought other means to rid the country of the Jews who constituted the spiritual support of the Marranos.

In his desperation, he resolved upon the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. At one time or another, almost all the Christian nations of Europe had resorted to similar means in dealing with their Jewish problem. At the end of the thirteenth century, the Jews had been driven from England. At the end of the fourteenth century, they had been banished from France. During the same century, they had become "voluntary" exiles from Germany. Now, at the close of the fifteenth century, Spain planned to emulate the example of her sister states. Though a cruel and ruthless measure, it fitted perfectly the evil purposes of Torquemada. It was likewise a dangerous measure, for the Jews had been intricately concerned with the economic life of Spain. But what did the fifteenth century Spaniards know of the economic interests of their country? What did Torquemada care for the welfare of Spain?

Torquemada's hatred of the Jews was even greater than his love for the church. The Jews obsessed him. Their presence in Spain filled him with frenzied rage. Yet his aversion to the Jews was not so much religious, as racial. It was their Semitic origin which he hated most. He loathed the baptized Jew no less than his unbaptized brother. Both excited his persecution mania. In fact, he was so absorbed in the struggle against the Marranos that for a long time the campaign against their

*(This study of Columbus is from Dr. Minkins's new book, "Abarbanel, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain," published with the permission of the author.—Ed.)*

unproselytized brethren was forgotten entirely. It is indeed ironical that the great numbers of unconverted Jews should have remained beyond the clutches of the Inquisition for any length of time. But as conforming Jews, they were outside the jurisdiction of the church and the Inquisition could not touch them. This annoyed and irritated Torquemada. It was something he could neither understand nor forgive. Baptized Jews were being persecuted and burned for the slightest reversion to their old faith, while their openly observing brethren were allowed to remain free and unmolested. Implacably, therefore, he turned his unbending will toward the execution of the second half of his program, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. Having scored one tri-



Jacob S. Minkin

umph, the unpitying Knight of the Cross was relentlessly determined upon this still more crushing blow.

Circumstances favored Torquemada's design. Ferdinand and Isabella were proceeding triumphantly through Andalusia. Scores of Moorish strongholds had fallen before the conquering Christian armies. The sovereigns now pushed forward toward Malaga, which was to be the prelude to the conquest of Granada, the very last bulwark of Saracen dominion in Spain. This was the perfect moment to press for the fulfillment of the old Visigoth ideal, "one state, one faith." Torquemada snatched at the opportunity. Now that

## SOURCE MATERIAL ON COLUMBUS' JEWISH BACKGROUND

*(The following notes on the historical material tending to prove that Columbus was a Jew were provided for the REVIEW by Dr. Minkin.)*

IT appears that some time about the year 1900, a Spaniard, Don Garcia de la Riega, a resident of Pontevedra, in Galicia, wrote the story that Columbus was a Spaniard and a Jew, from whence comes the authority, if authority it be, for the statement we refer to in our introduction, that 'the blood that flowed in Columbus' veins was three-quarters Jewish' . . . . Don Garcia also discovered that at these times there was at Pontevedra a Jewish family by the name of Ponterossa, who had some connection with the Colons. Then he also found that the name of Columbus' mother was Susanna, ( a Jewish name), Fontenrossa, closely resembling Ponterossa, the name of the Jewish family of Pontevedra; and thereupon reached the con-

clusion that Columbus' father, and even he, might have been born in Pontevedra instead of Genoa, and that both were of Jewish blood."

From: "Was Christopher Columbus a Jew?" by Walter F. McEntire. The Stratford Company.

"Among those who were led to the great *auto-de-fe* at Tarragona, on July 18, 1489, clothed in the garb of penitents, were Andreas Colon, his wife Blanche, and his mother-in-law Francisca Colon. They all confessed that they had observed rites, ceremonies, and holidays of the Jews. What must have been the feelings of Christopher Columbus, or Colon, when he heard that members of the Jewish race bore his name, and had been condemned by the Inquisition?"

"In order to gain the favor of the pious queen, he wrapped himself in the mantle of religious fanaticism. He

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the Moors were virtually conquered, Torquemada demanded the expulsion of the Jews, as well as their blood-relations and spiritual allies.

He presented his demands to the queen, who was spiritually so subjected to him that she could deny him nothing. Isabella hesitated, faltered. She was confused and amazed by so bold a proposal. Nor was she quite prepared for so momentous a decision—not yet. But the priest pursued her insistently, worked on her weak, yielding mind, threatening and menacing in the name of religion and the salvation of her soul. He pleaded and harangued, charging the Jews with every conceivable crime against the throne and the nation. He went so far as to acknowledge his own failure to extirpate heresy from her kingdom. In spite of his zeal, in spite of the torture and the Inquisition, he argued, heresy had not been stamped out, no, it was as rampant as ever before. Terrorized by the fierceness of his onslaught, the queen finally yielded and gave him the fatal promise which was to bring destruction to the Jews and ruin to Spain.

The work of the priest, however, had not yet ended. He had subdued the reluctance of the queen, he must needs conquer the resistance of the people. To accomplish this, the ruinous edict of expulsion would have to have at least the appearance of a spontaneous, popular revolt against the Jews. Torquemada was fully aware of the opposition which his plan was likely to arouse, for the Jews had formed numerous, intimate social and economic ties in Spain. Yet, if he should succeed in exciting popular resentment against them, how perfectly it would demonstrate—so he craftily reasoned—the justice of his demands in the eyes of his sovereigns, how completely his accusations would be vindicated.

Torquemada once again set to work with that unrelenting singleness of purpose known only to fanatics. His task was not difficult, for it took little to inflame the angry passions of the masses. He had only to revive the age-old charges of desecrated Hosts and ritual murder to bring down upon the Jews the venom and fury of the credulous populace.

Thus, while Torquemada was still arguing his case before the king and queen, his henchmen, the Dominican monks and friars, were even then preparing the minds of the people. They resorted to all manner of malicious

fabrications, no rumor or gossip being too absurd and ridiculous to employ. Their campaign of slander and vilification was amazing for its sheer audacity. Jewish physicians were charged with carrying poison under their finger-nails to bring death to the sick whom they were called upon to cure. The illness of Prince Juan was attributed to Jewish sorcerers. Jews were accused of secretly conspiring with their coreligionists in other lands to destroy Christianity and bring about the triumph of Judaism. Letters and documents purporting to prove these charges were circulated by the thousands, and, though palpable forgeries, they were accepted as genuine. There was but one "offense" which seemed more probable—that of "Judaizing," or striving to reclaim those of their race who had recently embraced Christianity, though this also included the less likely charge of attempting to convert Christians to the Jewish faith.

Of all the accusations, the most infamous was that of the celebrated case of the child called La Guardia. Although the charge was so obviously false, so evidently the frenzied creation of the torture chamber and the craven mind of Torquemada that the Inquisition abandoned its attempt to frame a consistent indictment, nevertheless, it spread rapidly throughout the country, bringing added disaster upon the Jews.

At Avilla, six Marranos and five Jews were dragged off by the Inquisition and charged with the murder of a Christian child named La Guardia. The principal witness against them was one Yuce Franco, a Marrano youth of limited intelligence. After suffering the most extreme tortures of the rack, he was approached by a priest in the guise of a rabbi, who, it was claimed, wrung a "confession" from the unfortunate victim "implicating" the others and "admitting" that the child had been slain for the sinister purpose of using its heart, together with a consecrated wafer, as a magic potion to bring madness and death to all Christians and to effect the "triumph" of Judaism. On this absurd "evidence," the denounced persons were convicted and executed, being mutilated and torn with scorching pincers before meeting their death in the flames, and the legend of the Jews' implacable hatred for Christianity was circulated widely among the people.

It is now known that there never

was such a child—much less a murdered one—and that the whole case was a plot from beginning to end to advance Torquemada's evil designs for the expulsion of the Jews.

\* \* \*

While the annihilation of the Jews was thus being contemplated, a man arrived in Spain to seek aid in a daring venture, which, though seemingly of little significance to the Jews at the time, was destined to bring renewed strength and hope to millions of their brethren in future generations. That man was Christopher Columbus.

The figure of Columbus has ever been cloaked in mystery. Almost everything that is known about him—his origin and his birth, his character and history and achievements—is now in dispute. His secret may one day be learned, but today, there is so much uncertainty about him that fully fourteen cities are celebrated as his birthplace and two tombs are recorded as bearing his remains. Both Spain and Italy claim the honor of having cradled this extraordinary man who possessed the soul of a poet and the vision of a prophet, and France, too, seeks a share in his glory.

In recent years, however, certain facts have come to light which lead to the most astonishing conclusions concerning him. If these prove true, then Christopher Columbus was neither Spanish, nor Italian, nor French; Christopher Columbus was a Jew—the son of a martyred and persecuted people who were driven to deny their birth and their religion to escape the vigilance of the Inquisition. It is the opinion of a number of modern writers and scholars that Columbus was a member of the Jewish family of Colón, of Pontevedra, in Spain. It is known that three members of this family were burned at the stake as heretics in Taragona, in 1489, during Columbus' own lifetime, and it is possible that he himself witnessed their suffering. Among the writers who advance the theory of his Jewish origin are Garcia de la Riega, Constantino Pedro, M. Kayserling, Blasco Ibanez, Henry Vignaud, Hyland C. Kirk and Maurice David.

However, if documentary proof of Columbus' Jewish ancestry is lacking, there is no want of circumstantial evidence; for throughout his life he displayed many small traits and characteristics which were of a distinctly

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## A NOTABLE ANNIVERSARY

By SOPHIA SOSKIN

**A** LITTLE over ten years ago a group of earnest young parents, themselves Americans born and bred, met at the Brooklyn Jewish Center to discuss with Rabbi Levinthal the launching of a new school for their children.

What did they seek which no other school could offer? Were their objectives different or was it merely the method of arriving at those goals which they wished changed? Could they be explicit about the scope and details of such a venture, or were they frankly experimental in their approach?

It was clear from the start that they were impelled by the conviction that integration of personality and harmony of spirit could be achieved for the Jewish child only if his education resulted in identification with his people in as natural and inevitable a way as it linked him with the contemporary American scene.

To be sure, there were the afternoon Hebrew classes. But they followed on an already inelastic and highly disciplined school day. "Inadequate," was the verdict of the group. "Two influences, mutually exclusive." "The children resent giving up their afternoon play." "Children should not be assigned to studies all day long." "It is important that children be well-rounded."

Then there were the Yeshivahs. Granted that here the child was exposed to only one influence—the Jewish one. Yet might it not be that such

an environment was a limiting one and unduly protective? Might it not result in insecurity and in unresolved conflict just as soon as the child was subjected, no matter how belatedly, to the rigors and complexities of the larger world?

In 1928 a good deal was being said and written about progressive education, that is to say, about new principles and techniques in education. We were learning that different children have different needs, that these needs must be met in different ways, that variations in personality are precious and should be preserved. A shift in emphasis had taken place. The skills—reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, etc.—long taught as separate and unrelated objectives were no longer to be taught as ends in themselves. Rather, instruction in skills was now to provide children with techniques for genuine functional purposes.

The essential means of education, the new curriculum, consisted of activities and the materials used in these activities. It sought to relate growing children to the culture in which they lived. The child's need for orientation and direction, the needs and opportunities of the social group in which he functioned, the folk ways of his people, their qualities, their ethics, their standards, their points of view, their values, all combined to form the content of the new course of study. It was to concern itself, then, with the richest and fullest in individual development and with the interplay of individuals in larger social groups.

This group of parents then said, "We shall help our children to pursue their own interests. We shall encourage them, through our new school, to express whatever creative strengths they may possess. They shall grow in harmony with their social, emotional, mental and physical development. And

within the frame work of the general educational plan we shall develop a Jewish program which will make it possible for the child to be effective in Jewish life." A challenging task and an exciting one.

It was felt that a joyous, eager and inquiring attitude in the mastering of Jewish knowledge—even if it were to be at the expense of quantity of information imparted—was much to be preferred to intensity and pressure with its inevitable risk of negativism.

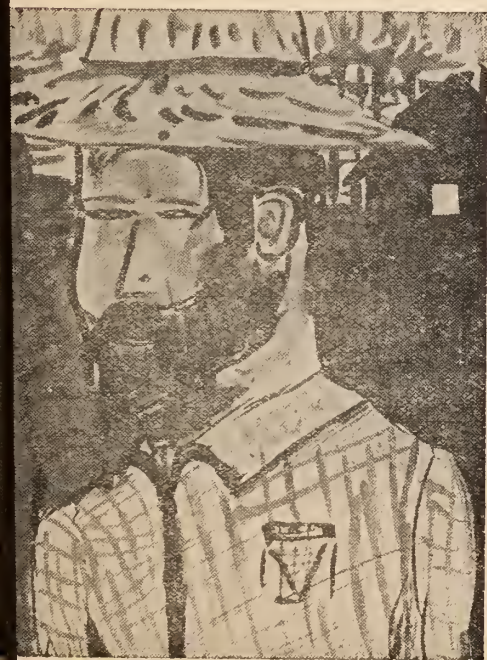
The Hebrew language was the next consideration. Not a dissenting voice. There could be no substitute for it as a definite link with the new Palestine—the new Palestine, which in its struggle for independence and self-preservation, its drama of agricultural expansion, and its hospitality to emigrants from Poland and Rumania could appeal so strongly and intimately to a child steeped in the American tradition.

Two years ago, Mrs. Fannie Neumann, an inspired organizer of the Center Academy, imaginative in her planning and ardent and vigorous in her work, in an article entitled "A Modern Jewish Experimental School—In Quest of a Synthesis," wrote in the January-March, 1932 issue of *Jewish Education*:

"A good part of this program has been organized about the Jewish festivals. Sometime before the holiday, the Hebrew language study as well as the art, music, and even English work converge on the approaching festival celebration. When the child writes and stages his own "plays" (sometimes English, sometimes Hebrew), he is filled with an impelling curiosity about the Jewish historical background—our folk-ways and racial culture. He inquires into the origins of the holiday and the manner of its celebration. The Bible begins to take on a real meaning to him: the desert wanderings, Ruth,



Two paintings by Academy children. Above, "Workers," by a twelve-year-old, and below, "Halutz," by a ten-year-old student.





David, Esther, the Maccabees — the story thrills! Designing costumes and scenery, making stage properties, creating songs and rhythms for the holiday celebration, all help the child to grow in power while he learns. And subtly, as the development goes on, he gains not only factual knowledge, but what is most important, a warm regard for Jewish customs and traditions and a keen appreciation of the beauty involved in their observance.

"The Sabbath and holiday celebrations serve to accomplish several purposes. They emphasize the social solidarity of the school by drawing all groups and activities into the orbit of the holiday 'project.' They offer convenient points of vantage from which to catch the highlights of Jewish history."

Eight more years have gone by. From the small handful of children with whom we started, the Center Academy has grown into a full-fledged elementary school, chartered by the State Board of Regents. We provide for thorough and efficient teaching of the basic and fundamental learnings and skills in the lower school and for equally expert teaching of the more highly organized subject matter in the upper school. Frequent standard achievement tests in all the groups indicate superior progress. We rejoice in our superior Music Department, in which traditional Hebrew chants and modern Palestinian festival and work songs mingle happily with folk songs of other lands; the Virginia reel and the Hora spell no forced alignment; psalter and flageolet give tune to "Now in the Month of Maying," and the Chanukah "Svivon" with equal felicity; and study in techniques and harmony leads to creation of original melodies to the accompaniment of words in either tongue.

The children's paintings and sculpture have been exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum, at the Neumann Galleries, at the New York Young Men's Association, at the Jewish Welfare Board, and at the Jewish Theological Seminary. The Museum of Modern Art has bought several of our children's paintings for their permanent collection. Paintings depicting the opening of the new harbor at Tel Aviv, the unloading of fruit by a freighter of the United Fruit Lines down at the docks in lower Manhattan, the serious Talmudic student bent low over his book, the early budding trees in Prospect Park, the Chalutz at work in the orange grove, may all be



*School scenes. Above, studying farm life in Palestine. Below, smelting lead ore.*

the products of the same day and be found leaning in amiable propinquity against the wall of the art room. Above, on a shelf, an exquisite French dancer, modeled of clay and tinted and glazed with delicacy, stands next to a terrifying and ugly Haman.

An informal but well-equipped laboratory and shop lends itself to numerous experiments on the child's level and affords many satisfactions in the learning process.

In crafts, beauty finds expression in silver bracelets studded with semiprecious stones, in vases or trays of hammered pewter, in carefully wrought ceremonial vessels of copper for the school Passover Seder.

Six groups of graduating students have gone their way into the Public High Schools. We have watched their progress with critical interest. We sought to provide at the Center Academy a continuous, integrated, and progressively broadening experience for our children. We sought to provide opportunities for leadership and opportunities for the pursuit of individual interests. We have worked for

discipline and guidance which will teach the child to take into consideration the needs and desires of others as well as his own. We have aimed for an increasing sense of responsibility and self-control in our children.

What adjustment have these groups of children been making in high schools and colleges? How do they compare in academic rating with young people from the more conventional, formal type of school?

Does a fair proportion of these young people continue with their Jewish studies either through the post-graduate classes conducted by Miss Irene Bush, head of the Hebrew Department of the Center Academy, or through outside, private instruction?

How are they making use of their advantages? Are they well-integrated young people? Are they poised? Do they have qualities of leadership. Are they alive to the school problems of the day and their responsibility in relation to them? Have they a genuine feeling for justice, rightness, order?

We have been gratified by the results. We are thankful, and feel moved to greater effort.





# PALESTINE AT THE WORLD'S FAIR

(The following is a transcript of an address delivered by Dr. Levinthal at the dinner which closed the celebration in honor of the laying of the cornerstone of the Palestine Pavilion at the World's Fair grounds, Thursday evening, (Lag B'Omar, May 19, 1938)

**T**ODAY, as many of you know, is a Jewish holiday; not only the holiday which has been arranged for us here in connection with this significant and historic event, but it is an old Jewish holiday of more than 1,800 years observance. Today is *Lag B'Omar*. The entire season between the festival of Passover and a few days preceding the festival of Shevuoth is a period of mourning in Jewish life. No wedding is to be solemnized in these days, no celebration of rejoicing is to be held. Only today does the mourning give way to rejoicing and celebration.

The ancient rabbis give us an historic explanation for the significance of this *Lag B'Omar* holiday. They tell us in the *Talmud*, and the fact is repeated in the *Shulchan Aruch*, that in this period a plague raged among the disciples of Rabbi Akiba. 24,000 of them perished in that plague. On *Lag B'Omar* the plague miraculously ceased and the disciples took on new life and new strength.

We must try to understand the deeper meaning of this little tale. I do not believe that it refers to pupils who sat in the classrooms listening to the master, Rabbi Akiba. I doubt if in his academy there were actually so many thousands of pupils studying directly under him. We must try to recall the age in which Rabbi Akiba lived. In his day there occurred that heroic attempt to restore Israel's lost independence in their own land. The great warrior Bar Kochba arose and made the last heroic attempt to win back a Jewish Palestine from the conquering Romans. Alas, the Jewish people did not rally under his banner. Most of the rabbis looked down on his attempt and tried to discourage him. Rabbi Akiba was one of the very few great spiritual leaders who rallied to his support. He even dared to term Bar Kochba the Messiah and he regarded him as heaven-sent to win back Palestine for the Jews. He not only followed him

By DR. ISRAEL H. LEVINTHAL

himself, but he succeeded in gathering together a number of disciples who followed him and Bar Kochba. That is the meaning of the word *Talmidim* as used here, referring to the disciples of Rabbi Akiba. They formed that little group of idealists who were the true disciples of this sage and of this warrior, in their great and heroic attempt in behalf of a Jewish national life. But the struggle wasn't easy. Disappointment followed disappointment. Defeat came upon defeat; and the worst tragedy of all was that the plague of despondency and despair attacked even those disciples of Rabbi Akiba. One by one they fell by the wayside and were dead to the cause that they formerly held so dear. It was on this *Lag B'Omar* that the aged Rabbi Akiba was able, for once, to give these disciples new hope and instill into them new courage. Somehow, miraculously, he was able to speak to them that word of confidence that inspired them with new faith and with new life. The plague stopped, and once again they plunged with heart and soul into the struggle. Alas, they could not win the support of all the Jews. Had all Israel become the followers of Rabbi Akiba and Bar Kochba history might have had an altogether different tale to tell!

As I look about this large assemblage I see before me the disciples of the Bar Kochbas and the Rabbi Akibas of our age. The Zionists are the true *Talmidim* of the Herzls, the Nordaus, the Sokolows, and the Weizmanns—the new Rabbi Akibas. It was this little group of followers who helped to make Palestine what it is today and to achieve the success that Zionism has won.

But alas, in the last few years a plague has become visible even in the ranks of these *Talmidim*. We have met with one disappointment after another. Obstacles have been placed in our paths by those who should have been our greatest support. We were handicapped and thwarted in almost every endeavor. And many of these disciples began to lose heart and courage and fell by the wayside, dead to the great cause of Jewish emancipation. I have the faith that this *Lag B'Omar*, today, will accomplish the

same miracle which it accomplished in the days of Rabbi Akiba. It will put an end to this plague of despair and despondency that has taken hold of so many of us. It will instill within us new cheer, new hope, new courage, and new faith. We will come here in this Palestine Pavilion, when the Fair will be opened, and we will glory in the fact that side by side with other nations and other peoples, the Jewish people, too, have taken their place in the family of nations; that side by side with the exhibits of all other lands, little Palestine will be able to portray to the world the achievements of its national rebirth in these few decades of great adventure. We will see before our eyes a living *Shir Ha-Maaloth*, a *psalm of ascents*, the story of how Palestine grew and developed and ascended step by step, despite all obstacles, all handicaps and all hardships. Then we will indeed cry out, "The Lord hath done great things with us," and a new life of strength and determination will take hold of us. And, not only we Jews, but the many thousands of non-Jews who will come to this pavilion will also look with a different eye upon our struggle and our noble adventure. "Then will they among the nations say, 'The Lord hath done great things with these'." This pavilion, when the exhibit will be opened, will put an end to the plague of despondency that is raging in Jewish life and will give us new confidence in the ultimate victory of our struggle.

But the exhibit will do more. Those of us who were privileged to visit Eretz Israel and who saw with our own eyes the drama of rebirth that was taking place, could not become affected by the plague of despair. We caught the contagion of enthusiasm and fire of devotion that animated our brothers and sisters toiling in that land. But most of the four million Jews in America cannot visit Palestine. They are denied the privilege of seeing with their own eyes what is actually taking place on that historic soil. They hear what we tell them and what we try to describe to them, but you remember the old Jewish saying, that "hearing cannot compare with seeing." There is a very striking comment of the ancient



sages that beautifully illustrates this fact. When God commanded Moses to build the sanctuary in the wilderness, they tell us, *nishkashe Moshe*, that Moses found it difficult to actually start the work. God gave him the detailed specifications and measurements and yet, somehow or other, Moses could not undertake the task. Then, say the sages, God led him to the mountain top and there, on the mountain top, He showed him the *tavnis hamishkan ba-esh*, the image of this sanctuary made in fire—the image of the ark in fire, of the Menorah in fire, and all of the other instruments and vessels in fire; and when Moses beheld this model, then, say the sages, he started to work and made the sanctuary according to that image that he saw with his own eyes.

Thousands of Jews throughout America who will come to this Pavilion will behold with their own eyes the *tavnis Hamishkan*, the image of this living sanctuary that we are creating in Palestine. They will not only see figures and measurements and numbers, but they will see something of the *esh*, the fire that animates all those who are engaged in this process of rebuilding and reconstruction. No one who will gaze upon this stone which we have set today, coming as it does from *Chanuta*, the newest colony in northern Palestine, will fail to catch a glimpse of that fire of courage and heroism which those colonies have displayed in recent days, and seeing this image and the fire on which this image is built, they will go back to their own homes inspired to work and to sacrifice for this effort as they have never done before.

And one thought more before I close. You know, I am sure, that in ancient times, every Jew was bidden to go to Jerusalem and to visit the sacred shrine, the Holy Temple, three times a year. Not only from all Palestine, but wherever the Jew was, he felt it his privilege and duty to make three pilgrimages and to behold the *Shechinah*. The rabbis of old make a striking play upon this injunction of the Bible. They tell us that just as the Jew came *Lireot, to see*, so he also came *Leheraot, to be seen!* He not only viewed the *Shechinah* but the *Shechinah* was given an opportunity to view him and to ask him as it were, "What have you done to promote the *Shechinah* in Jewish life?" Men and women, the thousands of Jews who

will come to this Pavilion, will come to see Eretz Israel. But, while they are seeing Eretz Israel, Eretz Israel will see them and cause a searching of their hearts. The spirit of Eretz Israel will challenge them and ask them: "Look, you see this remarkable growth and progress. What have you done to make it possible; what is your share in this process of rebirth of your people and your people's land?" And I am confident that when they leave these walls after this searching of their hearts they will come back to their homes with a new consecration and a new determination to do a great share in this work that belongs to each and every one of us.

Because this pavilion will accomplish all this, because it will mark a new *Lag B'Omar* in Jewish life, we must

see to it that it shall be worthy of all the hopes and all the expectations that are centered therein. The governments of these nations are erecting their pavilions. We have not as yet the government that can sponsor this undertaking. The obligation is ours, yours and mine, to complete the task so auspiciously begun today. The Sanctuary in the wilderness, too, was the creation of the free-will offering of all Jews. And this *Tavnis Ha-Mishkan* must likewise be the achievement of the free-will offering of every Jew who takes pride in what Palestine is and in what it has achieved.

This is a great day in the life of American Israel and in the making of the renascent Eretz Israel. "This is the day which the Lord hath made, let us be glad and rejoice in it!"

## FROM THE SERMONS OF DR. LEVINTHAL

You recall the Biblical tale of how Abraham came to the people of Heth to beg them to sell unto him a plot of ground wherein to bury his wife Sarah. You remember how they wanted Abraham to accept the choicest piece of their land as a gift, but how he stubbornly refused to accept it unless they would sell it to him for a good and substantial purchase price. When he makes his request of them, he introduces his speech with the words: "*Ger V'soshov Onochi Imochem*"—"I am a stranger and a sojourner in your midst." The rabbis offer us many comments in explanation of this strange statement. Either he was a stranger, or a resident amongst them—he could not be both at the same time. But Rashi quotes a beautiful Midrash which reveals to us the true soul of Israel. Abraham said to the people of Heth, according to the sages: "If I chose I could take all of your land; aye, I could even drive you forth from this place, for I am a *Toshov here*. It is mine, it all belongs to me, for I hold in my hand the declaration of God—'Unto thee and thy children will I give all this land.' But no! Though I have the legal right to act like a *Toshov* amongst you I prefer to regard myself as a *Ger*—a stranger—in your midst, and want to pay for every inch of land that I shall purchase from you!"

What is our history but the record of a continuous martyrdom of our faith? What other people has suffered so much and sacrificed so much for its belief? The *Akedah* of Isaac has been enacted and re-enacted almost daily throughout the centuries.

The 1938-39 edition of "Who's Who in American Jewry," recently published, mentions a number of well-known Gentiles who have embraced Judaism. Among the 10,140 names included in the publication are those of three persons who voluntarily turned from Christianity to Judaism. They are Norma Shearer, the actress, Thelma Spear, a concert singer and the wife of Ludwig Lewisohn, and Aime Pallierre, lay preacher of the Rue de Copernic Synagogue in Paris. This volume lists the names of 54 persons who were born in the Jewish faith, but now profess other religions.

\* \* \*

That influential Gentiles are actively sympathetic with Jewish aspirations in Palestine is shown by the leadership of Count Schoenborn, a Gentile, in Zionist activities. The Count, who is a German pro-Zionist, was made chairman of the Keren Hayesod campaign in Czechoslovakia. His activities in behalf of Zionism have brought in considerable money from Christians and especially from anti-Nazi Germans.



# JEWISH EVENTS REVIEWED

By LESTER LYONS

**W**HILE emphasizing that Judaism owes a great debt of gratitude to Zionism, Prof. Albert Einstein stated at the sixth annual "Third Seder" celebration of the National Labor Committee for Palestine that he would "much rather see a reasonable agreement with the Arabs on the basis of living together in peace than the creation of a Jewish state." He expressed the fear that a Jewish state, and especially "a narrow nationalism," would result in "inner damage" to Judaism. "A return to a nation in the political sense of the word," he said, "would be equivalent to turning away from the spiritualization of our community which we owe to the genius of our prophets."

\* \* \*

The Palestine Pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair was officially launched on May 19. On that day the representatives of over 350 Jewish communities took part in the ceremonies attending the laying of the cornerstone for the exhibit. The cornerstone itself, comes from an ancient synagogue found on the site of Hanita, the youngest Jewish colony and the northernmost Jewish outpost in Palestine. The exhibit is intended to express the spiritual, cultural and economic achievements of the Jewish people. A national committee of more than one thousand Jewish leaders, and fifty national Jewish organizations representing practically all American Jewry are sponsoring the project.

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Plans are being made for the erection by German exiles and refugees of an exhibit at the Fair displaying German culture prior to the advent of the Nazi regime. Under the leadership of Dr. Kurt Rosenfeld, former Prussian Minister of Justice, many prominent German emigres and anti-Nazi organizations are cooperating in carrying out this undertaking.

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The chief of the Mexican Department of Immigration has informed *Der Weg*, Mexico City's Yiddish paper, that the doors of Mexico are open to Austrian and German refugees. In Greece, however, it is reported that the authorities are discriminating against those refugees who are Jewish.

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An emergency proposal to settle in Palestine 100,000 Jews a year for the next five years was adopted at a national conference of the United Palestine Appeal. More than 800 delegates present at the conference submitted this plan to President Roosevelt for consideration by the intergovernmental committee that is being formed to solve the problem of refugee emigration.

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At the 15th general convention of B'nai B'rith, William B. Bankhead, Speaker of the House of Representatives, paid tribute to the great part played by Jews in the founding of the American government. He declared that the "democratic ideal is not only pervasive of our American civilization, but is basic as a powerful impulse in the history of the Jewish people. No people has more richly endowed the democratic heritage which is ours." He continued: "The children of Israel, who since the dawn of history, have been sleepless sentinels on the frontiers of freedom, will not be forsaken by those who share their spiritual heritage." Speaker Bankhead bitterly assailed all dictatorships and particularly the Nazi regime, saying that, "Were we to sanction in America any of the monstrous acts now being perpetrated against helpless Jewish people in other lands, it would constitute an assault upon the very foundations of our government."

\* \* \*

On Good Friday, the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation in Dallas, Texas, collected from its members \$1,139.64 for the benefit of European Jewish refugees. The minister of the church, Dr. Valentine Lee, in presenting this fund to the rabbi of the local Temple Emanu-El at the Seder service on Passover, said that when one member of the body is hurt the entire body feels it, that all were members of the body of humanity, and that his people felt the hurt that has come to the Jews through oppression and persecution at present in Central Europe. This money has been turned over to the Joint Distribution Committee, which is sponsoring a campaign

to collect \$4,500,000 for the aid of destitute and oppressed Jews abroad.

\* \* \*

Three hundred ministers and laymen attending the New York Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church strongly condemned the persecution of minority groups, and particularly of Jews, in central and eastern Europe. The conference unanimously adopted a resolution expressing their "abhorrence" of such persecution, "more especially the utterly outrageous persecution of people of Jewish blood and religion, and most especially the latest of their intolerable outrages, the ruthless inhuman barbarities visited upon the Jews of Austria immediately following the conquest of that land by the German totalitarians." The resolution assured the President of the United States that the conference would support all measures to help the victims of such persecution.

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At its annual conference in Milwaukee, the National Catholic Educational Association denounced the propagandists of race hatred and the oppressors of Jews and Christians.

\* \* \*

Anti-Jewish agitation by Arabs in Egypt, on the increase during the past few weeks, is being vigorously checked by the Egyptian government. Assisted and financed by Nazi agents, Palestinian Arab leaders residing in Egypt as refugees have endeavored to instigate boycotts against the Jews. Propaganda is disseminated by them among the Moslems to the effect that the Jews want to destroy the Mohammedan holy shrines in Palestine in order to rebuild the Jewish temple. The government has confiscated anti-Jewish propaganda and warned the Arab leaders to abstain from political activities under penalty of deportation. The Rector of Al Azhar University, who is the highest Moslem ecclesiastical authority, is friendly toward the Egyptian Jews and Christian community and has promised to do all in his power to prevent racial or religious animosity in Egypt.

\* \* \*

A proposal to admit only "Aryans" to the Polish Legion, an organization



of war veterans, was defeated at the annual convention of Polish ex-servicemen. General Gorecki, president, who opposed this resolution, appointed a leader of the Jewish Ex-Servicemen's Association to the executive of the Legion.

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Back from a three-month survey in Poland for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Alexander Kahn, New York attorney, reported that anti-Semitism in Poland does not arise from the masses but from a comparatively small group. He said that the Polish people are increasingly spurning the anti-Jewish agitators who consist of "the sons of large landowners, industrialists, the bankrupt nobility and bureaucracy." Despite pogroms and economic persecution, Poland's Jews, he said, are unbroken in spirit. Their chief means of economic defense is through the Free Loan Institutions, for which the Joint Distribution Committee has appropriated \$1,000,000 since 1926. These institutions have enabled Jewish families and businessmen to support themselves through small loans payable without interest.

\* \* \*

The aspirations of the anti-Semitic Iron Guard to capture control of the Rumanian government were decisively crushed when the authorities arrested 2,000 party members and sentenced their leader, Codreanu, to six months' imprisonment. The Iron Guard had been supplied by foreign interests with \$400,000 to achieve its ends. It was discovered that Codreanu had planned the assassination of many prominent Jews. A secret list of his which came into the possession of the government marked for death the Chief Rabbi of Rumania and the President of the Jewish Party.

\* \* \*

The Technical Commission on the Partition of Palestine has completed its tour of the country for the purpose of obtaining first-hand information on the various aspects of its general problem. At present it is holding formal hearings. The Arabs have made extensive plans to boycott the Commission and to protest against the policy of the British Government in Palestine. Despite governmental restrictions, numerous Arab strikes are taking place throughout the country.

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With the Fuehrer of the "White

Camelias" of Charleston, West Virginia, as their leader, many anti-Semitic bodies in this country have united forces into a national organization for the purpose of more effectively carrying on pro-Nazi, anti-Jewish activities. Some of the affiliated groups are the Ku Klux Klan, Pelley's "Silver Shirts," the "Gray Shirts," the Militant Christian Patriots, the "White Camelias," the German-American Bund, the National Council of Christian Soldiers, the White Russian Veterans, the Sons of Washington, the Sailors and Marines, and the Order of Paul Revere.

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If the efforts of the Turkish Government are successful, 200 eminent Austrian-Jewish scientists and physicians will be able to obtain refuge in Turkey to continue their work and research in Turkish hospitals, laboratories and cultural institutions.

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In the first prosecution of its kind under the Penal Law of this state prohibiting frauds and misrepresentations in the sale of kosher food products, the Court of Special Sessions in Brooklyn convicted and imposed a fine of \$250 on a poultry dealer who, in violation of the Orthodox Hebrew religious requirements, sold a chicken as kosher. The gist of the offense was that the dealer's poultry establishment had failed to have Rabbinical supervision under the auspices of the Kashruth Association of Greater New York Inc., and that a seal of the Kashruth Association had not been attached to the fowl. The Kashruth Association, composed of prominent laymen and most of the Orthodox Rabbis of this city, had been designated by the United Rabbinate of Greater New York as its instrumentality for safeguarding and promoting Kashruth. Louis J. Gribetz had been appointed special assistant district attorney for the purpose of prosecuting the case.

\* \* \*

A Polish journalist sentenced by the Polish Court of Appeals to one month's imprisonment for his attacks on the Jews created a furor in the courtroom when he voluntarily requested that his conviction be enforced. He said that he realized his guilt and

wished to atone for his crime against the Jews. As further proof of his change of heart he donated some money to an organization founded by Irene Harrand, an Austrian gentile, to combat anti-Semitism. Mme. Harrand was barely able to escape from Austria to avoid arrest by the Nazis.

\* \* \*

Indictments charging Robert Edward Edmondson, notorious anti-Semitic pamphleteer, with having criminally libeled "all persons of the Jewish religion," Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor, and Virginia C. Gildersleeve, Dean of Barnard College, were dismissed by Judge James G. Wallace in the Court of General Sessions in New York. Several liberal and Jewish organizations, including the American Jewish Congress, and the American Jewish Committee, had interceded on Edmondson's behalf on the ground that a conviction would impair the rights of free speech, free press and religious liberty. The court, while conceding that the defamatory matter circulated by the defendant was "palpably the outpourings of a fanatical and bigotted mind," stated that "more would be lost than could be gained by attempting to protect the good name of a religion by an appeal to the criminal law." The court further said that "it is wiser to bear with this sort of scandal-mongering rather than to extend the criminal law so that in the future it might become an instrument of oppression. We must suffer the demagogue and the charlatan in order to make certain that we do not limit or restrain the honest commentator on public affairs."

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Under the auspices of ICOR, the tenth anniversary of the settlement of Biro-Bidjan, the Jewish territory in Russia, was celebrated here. Alexander Troyanovsky, Soviet Ambassador to this country, declared that Biro-Bidjan "is not a solution of Jewish international problems, but it exists as a banner and a symbol of Jewish liberty and an appreciation of the importance of the Jewish people."

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Declaring that "Christians must feel a responsibility," the Church Council in Decatur, Illinois, has urged all church members in that town to contribute to the aid of Jewish refugees through the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.



# THE MARTYR AKIBA

By DR. MICHAEL HIGGER

*(Between Passover and Pentecost the Jews count Sefirah. During this seven week period, more than 1800 years ago, thousands of the disciples of the famous Rabbi Akiba died, and their martyrdom has been immortalized through the curtailment of joyous celebrations during most of Sefirah.)*

*Dr. Higger's account of the career of Akiba, and of his work, is especially appropriate at this season of the Jewish year.*

*References for this article will be found at its conclusion, identified by the numerals which are interposed throughout the text.—EDITOR.)*

**A**KIBA ben Joseph, the well-known Palestinian *tanna*, was born about 50 C.E., and martyred about 132 C.E. Akiba was the most intellectually gifted scholar of the *tannaim*, and one of the most active spiritual leaders in Israel. His entire life was dramatic, full of romance, intellectual courage, and physical action and adventure. The world of experience was his schooling, and nature his first teacher. In that critical period of Israel's history when conditions called for leadership of the highest calibre, Akiba with his unusual power of observation, his ability to overcome difficulties and hardships, and his gigantic intellectual potentialities, was the one fitted to lead the people and to mould the destiny of Israel in the diaspora.

The story of Akiba's life, reconstructed on the basis of traditions and the numerous legends that have come down to us, reads like a novel of the first order. The one legend, however, that Akiba was a proselyte and a descendant of Sisera, has no historical ground. In his youth Akiba had been an illiterate shepherd, spending his days in the fields, hills and valleys of Palestine. But he was not a typical ignoramus. He formulated certain ideas about life, especially about city-life with its scholars; and, in the course of his discussions with country and city folk he would be outspoken about his hatred towards the city scholar.<sup>1</sup>

It was, perhaps, during one of the discussions in which he was denouncing the scholars, that Akiba's rich master's daughter became acquainted with

the alert shepherd, an acquaintance which led to the most ideal love-affair ever recorded in the annals of history. Kalba-Sabua, Akiba's master, was one of the three richest men in Jerusalem, and, Rachel, his daughter, despite her father's opposition, bestowed her love on Akiba. But she made one condition, that he change his entire way of life, take up the study of the Torah in the academies of learning, and thus acquire culture and become a scholar—the very type of man he had openly despised!<sup>2</sup> This was the most crucial point in the life of Akiba. An inner struggle between his love for the country life and his love for Rachel took place. In addition, he was aware of the difficulties of becoming master of the Torah, and doubted his own capacities. A nature incident, however, aided the shepherd lad to come to a positive decision. Observing a stone at a well that had been hollowed out by drippings from the buckets, Akiba remarked: "If these drippings can, by continuous action, penetrate this solid stone, how much more can the persistent words of the Torah penetrate the fleshy human heart."<sup>3</sup>

Before his departure for his new life, Akiba promised his beloved Rachel, that, as a token of his love for her, he would, on his return bring her a golden breast-plate on which the city of Jerusalem would be engraved.<sup>4</sup> Another reason for that promise was probably the Palestinian custom that when a country boy married a Jerusalem girl, or vice versa, the provincial boy, or girl, would present the Jerusalem native with a gift in the form of a gold-piece.<sup>5</sup>

According to some sources, Akiba was forty years old when he began his studies, spent forty years in the schools, and then served Israel for forty more.<sup>6</sup>

There may be some basis for the tradition that he had been married before he met Rachel, and that he had a son from his first marriage whom he took along to the elementary schools for study.<sup>7</sup>

During the period of his schooling, the most critical period of his life, Rachel stood loyally by her husband and remained faithful to him, living in the greatest poverty because her

father, in his anger, had cast her off from his support.

At the schools, Akiba, being advanced in age and possessing unusual intellectual potentialities, a faculty for observation, and determination, made good progress in the study of the Torah.

He would not only absorb the learning of his teachers, but also observed carefully—sometimes even to the point of absurdity<sup>8</sup>—their personal habits, practices, and mode of living.

Akiba's fellow-students at the academy of R. Eliezer were the first to learn of the unusual gifts of their colleague. On one occasion, when, in absence of Akiba, a series of halakic questions were raised in the academy, the disciples of R. Eliezer pointed out to their master the need for calling in Akiba to help them solve their problems.<sup>9</sup>

To the surprise of the teachers and students alike, Akiba, after a period of thirteen years of silence, participated now for the first time in an important halakic debate with his master, R. Eliezer, in which he dramatically defeated his teacher.<sup>10</sup>

Since that event Akiba was highly esteemed, and his reputation began to spread far beyond the walls of the academies and among the people at large.

At the height of his fame, Akiba, accompanied by a large group of disciples and admirers, visited his wife, Rachel. Her hard-hearted father, now proud of such a son-in-law, bequeathed to him his whole property.<sup>11</sup> Akiba's gratitude to his sorely tried wife was in proportion to the sacrifices which she had made for him.

In the long course of his studies, Akiba not only perfected himself in the knowledge of the Torah, whereby he extended the methodology of its interpretation and the application of the Holy Writ, but also formed gradually a system of Jewish theology and built up a philosophy of Judaism with special emphasis on the place of Israel in the world.<sup>12</sup>

Akiba's entire theological system was the outcome of his intense love for the Jewish people—a love which dominated his life, his struggles in the academies, at public gatherings, at home, on



the high-seas, as well as in the meeting places in Arabia, Africa, and Italy; a love for which he was finally martyred by the Romans.<sup>13</sup>

To Akiba, his academic life became a means to an end, to help the suffering people of Israel adjust themselves to the new conditions and surroundings, and, should they fail to defeat the Romans, to prepare themselves to lead a national life in form of an Ecclesia.

It was that love for his people that prompted Akiba to sympathize with Simon of Kozeba, the leader of the revolt against the Romans, and to acclaim him as the Messiah, though the more timid scholars protested.<sup>14</sup> He traveled far and wide to strengthen Jewish national solidarity and became the soul of the uprising.<sup>15</sup>

Akiba's death, which must have taken place about 132 C.E., before the fall of Bethar and the suppression of the revolution,<sup>16</sup> was as dramatic as his entire life.<sup>17</sup> Although a Baraita states that he suffered martyrdom because he refused to obey Hadrian's edicts against the practices and the teachings of the Jewish religion,<sup>18</sup> there is no doubt that the Romans became suspicious of his activities, and when the actual revolt started found enough reasons to execute him.

The execution of R. Akiba by the Romans is described in the Talmud in the following manner: When R. Akiba was taken to be executed, it was the hour when the Jewish law requires each Jew to pronounce the article of faith, or the Shema. The Romans killed him by tearing his flesh from his living body. While Akiba lay in agony, he pronounced in a loud voice: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." (Ber. 61b).

According to one tradition, Elijah, accompanied by Akiba's faithful servant, Joshua, entered unperceived the prison where the body of Akiba lay. Although Elijah was a priest, he took up the corpse and bore it by night to Caesarea. Elijah and Joshua entered then a cavern, and deposited Akiba's body there. When they left, the cavern closed of its own accord, and no man has found it since. (Midr. Mishle, ch. 9, pp. 31a-b, ed. Buber).

Akiba had many disciples whose names have not been handed down, and whose number is variously stated

by different sources at 12,000 (Ket. 62b), 24,000 (Yeb. 62b), and 48,000 (Ned. 50a; cf., also, Midr. Tanh., Hayye Sarah, sec. 6, Warsaw, 1902).

The importance of Akiba's contributions to Judaism and to Jewish life cannot be overestimated. The most important *Tannaim* of the second century came from Akiba's academy, at Bene Berak,<sup>19</sup> notably Meir, Judah ben Ilai, Simeon ben Yohai, Jose ben Halafta, Eleazar ben Shammua, and Nehemiah.

Akiba definitely fixed the canon of the Old Testament books; and he protested strongly against the canonicity of certain books of the Apocrypha.<sup>20</sup> His true genius, however, is shown in his work in the domain of the Halakah, that is, of religious praxis, both in his systematization of its material and in its further development. It was for this reason that his disciples declared that Akiba, like Ezra the Scribe, saved the Torah for Israel.<sup>21</sup>

Akiba was the first to arrange the traditional lore according to subject-matter.<sup>22</sup> He arranged the Halakas according to their context, so that all groups of laws concerning prayers, the Sabbath, marriage laws, and property, should form independent entities. The entire matter was thus divided into six similar parts, or *Sedorim*. That collection of the Halakas arranged by Akiba was later called *Mishnah* of R. Akiba, to distinguish it from the still later collection, the *Mishnah* of Judah ha-Nasi (called simply "the *Mishnah*"). The older collections (*Mishnah Rishona*) were often separated from the *Mishnah* of R. Akiba (*Mishnah Aharon*). But the latter was recognized as the norm.<sup>23</sup>

The *Mishnah* of R. Akiba is not extant in a separate collection. It was included in the *Mishnah* of Judah ha-Nasi. The "great *Mishnayot* of Akiba" referred to in Midr. Cant. R.8,2, and Eccl. R.6,2, are to be understood as independent *Mishnayot* existing at that time, and not merely as the teachings and opinions of Akiba contained in the officially recognized *Mishnayot* and *Midrashim*. For, the *Mishnayot* are grouped in the above-mentioned sources with other known collections.

Indeed, according to a statement made by Johanan bar Naphaha, and which has historical confirmation, most of the tannaitic collections of the halakic material were composed and edited in the school of R. Akiba.

Furthermore, Akiba introduced a new system of interpretation of the

Biblical texts, thereby placing the Oral Law on a firmer basis and diminishing to a considerable degree the dissensions concerning the Halakas. Akiba's teachers and colleagues alike were surprised and inspired by his principles and new paths of interpretations. Akiba undoubtedly felt that the intellectual bond uniting the Jews must be made in order to draw them closer together than before, and his Halakah is to be conceived as the result of an external contest between Judaism on the one hand, and Hellenism and Hellenistic Christianity on the other. The lenient view of Akiba, for instance, with regard to the law of divorce,<sup>24</sup> was to counteract the stringent attitude of the early Christians towards divorce.

In Akiba's system the law was not considered a dead treasure incapable of growth or development, or, as it was in the eyes of his teacher, Eliezer, a collection of mere memories, but was considered an everlasting mine in which new treasures might always be found. Akiba, convinced both of the unchangeableness of the Torah and of the necessity for growth and development in Judaism, succeeded in reconciling these two apparent opposites by means of his significant method.

As the fundamental doctrine of his system, Akiba maintained that the style of the Torah, especially in sections relating to the Halakah, was quite different from that of other writings. In the language of the Torah, nothing is mere form, nothing is superfluous, no word, no syllable, not even a letter. Every peculiarity of expression, of diction, every sign is to be regarded as of great importance, as having a wider relation and deeper meaning than it seems to have. While his colleague Ishmael held to the plain meaning of Scripture, Akiba constructed legal norms upon every letter of the Torah, nay upon its jots and tittles. Akiba had learned this new system from Hahum of Gimzo, under whom he studied a number of years.

Akiba also added a number of explanatory and deductive rules to those of Hillel and Ishmael,<sup>25</sup> and his additions afforded fresh ways of development for the traditional laws.<sup>25a</sup>

Akiba's popularity among the Amoraim was due, not so much to his views and sayings although his name is mentioned in practically every important discussion in Tannaitic literature — but rather to his method of argumen-

(Continued on page 20)



## WHEN DID "LIFE BEGIN" IN THE BIBLE?

By CHARLES J. BRIM, M.D.

*Author of "Medicine in the Bible"*

**M**OSSES has always been pictured by artists as a patriarchal old man with a staff in one hand and the Ten Commandments in the other. After reading through the five books of the Pentateuch, Moses appears as a living character, and we can trace his life from boyhood to old age. In physique, he was a powerfully built man who could well take care of himself even in a street brawl—witness his fight with the Egyptian who attacked a Hebrew. In intellect, he was a giant. And yet he was born a seven-month premature baby!

We know him as the Lawgiver. We recognize in him the Emancipator, for he liberated a nation of slaves and organized them into a self-governing community—the first republic in history (a national social and political state with a national religion of its own). As an engineer, chemist, and physician he had no equal in his day. In many instances he was thousands of years ahead of his time. Gaze upon the facade of the Health Department building of the City of New York and you will see listed among the names of the greatest physicians of all time, the name of Moses.

The science of economics may not have been then what it is today, but in order to build his nation Moses had to establish it and stabilize it upon a system of sane economic laws and principles. How well these are brought out in the Pentateuch!

Before our great depression "life began at forty"; today "life dies at forty." Men of that age are not in demand. They are considered too old. In mines, in factories, even in civil service positions younger men are favored. Articles and books have been written pro and con, some showing the advantages of the older and more experienced men, others pointing to the endurance and physique of the younger men. In all cases it is the factor of productivity that underlies the argument of this vital economic issue. In our era industry fixes this factor, and allots twenty years to the man of twenty to provide for his family.

Moses fixed his standards upon the per capita value of his people. His Computation Table demonstrates the value to his government of the man of 20, 30, 50 and 60.

In Leviticus, Chapter twenty-seven, verses one to eight, we find this table of human values:

Age	Male Value	Female Value
1 mth. to 5 yrs...	5 Shekels	3 Shekels
5 to 20 yrs.....	20 Shekels	15 Shekels
20 to 60 yrs.....	50 Shekels	30 Shekels
60 yrs. & over...	15 Shekels	10 Shekels

From this we learn that in the prime of life a man's worth to the community is twice that of a woman's. As age advances the difference is not so marked. After the age of sixty (considered to be past the earning capacity) the man's worth drops to less than one-third of his prime while the woman shows a relative increase—just one-third that of her prime.

In computing his table Moses took into consideration the earning power of both male and female during the Mosaic period. While the female contributed her share in household duties and sundry occupations such as sewing, embroidering, etc., she could not contribute as much as the male. The man's productive power decreases with age but that of the woman is at a standstill. After the age of sixty, however, the man's usefulness, as far as productivity is concerned, has ceased while that of the female is still apparent in such forms as light household duties, etc. An old man is a hindrance in the home while an old woman is an asset since she assists in the cooking, cleaning, and other domestic labors.

In the days of Moses the government, and not industry, was the employer of the people, and it was the concern of the government to regulate work. Moses, who was the elected head by unanimous vote of the people, decreed laws to guide such regulation.

During his administration the country was divided into twelve states functioning under a centralized authority. Each state had a representative in the central government, to safeguard the rights of his constituents. Within each state certain officials were appointed to regulate the various occupations and professions, and were

held responsible for the workers' proper performance of their duties.

The age for military service was twenty and upward. Each citizen was assigned to the job best fitted for him; some for skilled and other for unskilled labor. Men after fifty were permitted only light tasks. After sixty, they were retired from active duty and received a pension.

As for the arts and technical professions, a five year period of study from the age of twenty-five to thirty was required before admission to these specialized fields of endeavor.

In all councils, whether of state or local concern, "the elders" were always consulted. When Moses made ready to appear before Pharaoh to present his demands in behalf of his oppressed brethren he first consulted "the elders of Israel." Before he converted his statutes into law he "assembled the elders of the nation." The Hebrew term for elder is *zakan* which means *old*, not in its literal sense only, but as designating one whose judgment is mature, or one who has acquired wisdom through study. In post Biblical literature this term was applied to a graduate of a university. The graduates of the Shammai school were called *Zikne Beth Shammai*. Whether one gained experience in a recognized university or in the college of every-day life, he was recognized as a *zakan* or *elder*.

These ancient economic regulations and table of computations were devised by Moses at the time when he was eighty years of age. It was also during this period that he founded a new nation, and was making history!

When does "life begin," after all?

Jews who despair at their birth because of the indignities and persecutions to which their race is subject may profit by the action of four Hungarian Christians in Rumania. As a public gesture of sympathy with the Jews of Rumania, they became converts to Judaism.



# NEW BOOKS—JACOB S. MINKIN'S "DON ISAAC ABARBANEL" AND A NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE TALMUD

Reviewed By DR. ISRAEL H. LEVINTHAL

**D**R. Jacob S. Minkin, who has enriched Jewish literature with his fascinating books on Hasidism and Herod, has now won for himself new laurels by the publication of his latest work: "Abarbanel and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain."\*

Last year the Jewish scholarly world celebrated the five hundredth anniversary of the birth of Abarbanel. A number of studies appeared in commemoration of this anniversary, studies which delved anew into the many-sided character and achievements of this illustrious son of Spanish Jewry.

Dr. Minkin's study is unique among all these works because of the beauty of its language, the lucidity of its style, the brilliance of its presentation, and the dramatic power of its portrayal. The personality of Abarbanel lends itself to dramatic portrayal because few are the figures in history whose lives were so interwoven with drama as his. He lived in an age of drama. It was the period of the Spanish Inquisition, of the Spanish expulsion of the Jews, and of Columbus and his daring venture which resulted in the discovery of America. Abarbanel's life was intricately bound up with all these historic incidents. With a rare literary gift, with great power and yet with a delicate touch, Minkin describes for us the role that this notable Jewish figure played as statesman, financier, diplomat, and, above all, as a selfless and devoted leader of his people.

Dr. Minkin has the unusual ability to present in most popular fashion the results of scholarly research, and make the uninitiated in technical scholarship feel that they are reading the latest popular novel. In this volume one sees the panorama of the entire period of Spanish Jewish history, one of the most glorious as well as one of the most tragic in all our history.

Don Isaac Abarbanel is a unique figure in history for yet another rea-

son. He was not only the leader of his people in action, but also leader in thought. He was a man of intellect as well as of deeds. It is almost unbelievable how this man, busy and active as he constantly was in the affairs of his country and of his people, was yet able to produce so many and such important literary works. Dr. Minkin does not neglect to portray this phase of Abarbanel's achievements, and we get an appreciation of him as a Bible commentator, as philosopher, as mystic and proponent of the Messianic hope. True, the student in these particular branches of study would have welcomed a more detailed analysis of Abarbanel's contributions in these fields. To the average reader, however, the book does succeed in presenting the most important feature of Abarbanel's literary contributions.

The study of the Spanish era in the days of Abarbanel is important for

Jews of today because that era has so much in common with the great tragedy that has come upon our people in Nazi Germany and Austria. How comforting and how necessary are the words with which Abarbanel himself describes the catastrophe that met the Jews in Spain: "Every man said to his brother, 'Be strong and of good courage for the sake of our faith and the Law of our God. If he lets us live, we shall live. If, however, we are to die, we shall not be faithless to our covenant. Nor will we falter, but march onward in the name of our God.'"

Dr. Minkin is to be congratulated on having produced a work which will be read with interest and profit by Jew and Christian alike.

\*"Abarbanel, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain," by Jacob S. Minkin. Berman's Jewish Book House, N. Y., 1938.

**T**HE Library of the Brooklyn Jewish Center has lately been enriched by a set of books that will be welcomed by all lovers of Jewish literature. It is the first installment of a group of thirty-two volumes of the translation of the complete Talmud. The second installment is now on the way from England and will be on our shelves within a week or two. The remaining two installments are scheduled for publication in 1939.

The donor of this gift, Mr. Leo Weitz, a member of the Center, is himself a dealer in rare books. On the shelves of his unique shop at 439 Madison Avenue in New York, one finds precious first editions and rare and priceless manuscripts of medieval authors. To a lover of books an hour's visit to this treasury of literary gems is an unforgettable treat. Yet Mr. Weitz himself, versed as he is in the value of books, realizes that no book or set of books has had that influence upon the life of a whole people that the Talmud has had. Next to the Bible

it is not only the greatest work of Hebrew literature but the most popular, and the most influential in moulding the thought and character of the Jewish people.

The Talmud is not, strictly speaking, a book. It is a whole literature, and one of the monumental literary creations of all time. It is not the work of one man, or even of one generation. It was built up out of the sayings of the intellectual and spiritual leaders of the Jewish people in Palestine and Babylonia during the course of the first four or five centuries of the Christian era. Arranged not according to authors but to subjects, these sayings cover the whole gamut of Jewish life—religious worship, family and sex relationship, health and diet, study, business, labor, recreation, social intercourse, civil and criminal law, courts and procedure, and so forth. The Talmud may thus be said to represent the collective wisdom of the Jewish people during many centuries.

(Continued on page 19)



# BROOKLYN JEWISH CENTER ACTIVITIES

## LECTURES ON PSYCHOLOGY AND LITERATURE

Under the joint auspices of the Forum and Education Committee and the W.P.A. Adult Education Project of the N. Y. Board of Education, two course lectures are being given at the Center every Tuesday and Wednesday evening of the season.

The class in Psychology of Personality Adjustment under the leadership of Mr. Litwin is given every Tuesday evening at 8:30 o'clock.

Mr. Kaplan leads the class in Contemporary English Literature. These lectures are given every Wednesday evening in the dining room.

Admission to these courses is free to members as well as non-members.

## GIRLS ANNUAL CONSECRATION SERVICE TO BE HELD ON SHEVUOTH

The Third Consecration Service of the girls who have been specially prepared for this service will be held on the first day of Shevuoth, Sunday morning, June 5th.

The services will be held immediately following the *Musaf* prayers, promptly at 11 o'clock. The girls will take part in a very interesting program that will revolve on the theme of the role of the Jewish woman as revealed by the Sabbath and festivals.

The following girls make up the Consecration class this year: Priscilla Atlas, Jacqueline Brown, Rhoda Hiesiger, Muriel Himelstein, Marcia Koch, Rhoda Padolsky, Judy Schetzen, Mildred Seitzman, Gay Siegel.

## RECENT BOOKS ACQUIRED BY THE LIBRARY

The following books have been acquired recently by the Center library and are now ready for circulation:

Journeys Between Wars—Dos Passos.

The Specter—Maxim Gorki.

Marie Antoinette—Stefan Zweig.

Mary, Queen of Scotland—Stefan Zweig.

The Mind of Primitive Man—Franz Boaz.

The Hill of Lies—Heinrich Mann.

Life of Heine—Ludwig Marcuse.

## TESTIMONIAL DINNER TO MR. DAVID SHAPIRO



David Shapiro

A Testimonial Dinner will be given in honor of Mr. David Shapiro, honorary trustee and former treasurer of the Center, in appreciation of his services to the community and his devoted efforts on behalf of the American Joint Distribution Committee.

The dinner will be held at the Center on Thursday evening, June 9th at 6:30 o'clock. Judge Emanuel Greenberg, chairman of the Eastern Parkway Division of the Joint Distribution Committee, is chairman of the committee in charge of the dinner. Subscriptions may be made at the office of the Center at \$3.00 per person.

## GET IN THE SWIM!

NOW that the warm weather is with us, why not take advantage of our swimming pool?

SWIMMERS as well as non-swimmers are under constant supervision of Red Cross Life Savers.

IF you cannot swim, learn how now! This applies to men, and women, boys and girls.

KEEP COOL IN THE CENTER POOL!

## SHEVUOTH SERVICES

Shevuoth services will be held in our synagogue on Saturday and Sunday evenings at 8:15 o'clock and on Sunday and Monday mornings at 8:30. On the first day, Sunday, June 5th, the services will conclude promptly at 11 o'clock when the Consecration services will begin.

On the second day of Shevuoth, Monday, June 6th, the Yizkor or memorial service for the dead will be said at 10:15 o'clock. Rabbi Levinthal will preach on the significance of the festival. Rev. Kantor will officiate on both days.

## DECORATION DAY GYM AND BATH SCHEDULE

The Gymnasium and Baths Department will be open as per the holiday schedule on Monday, May 30th (Decoration Day). The department will be open to men from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M. and to boys from 2 P.M. to 5 P.M.

## CENTER RESTAURANT CLOSES FOR THE SEASON

The restaurant of the Center is now closed for the summer season.

This department will reopen in the Fall, at a date to be announced later.

## APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

The following have applied for membership in the Brooklyn Jewish Center:

Goldstein, Samuel

Brewery Married

Res. 112-21 212th Street

Bus. 250 Meserole Street

Proposed by Dr. Nathan A. Horowitz.

Mann, Abe

Exterminator Married

Res. 765 Eastern Parkway

Bus. 109 W. 116th St.

Proposed by Jacob S. Doner and Louis Gordon.

Resnikoff, I.

Builder Married

Res. 253 Montgomery St.

Bus. Same

Proposed by Jack Harmatz

Rosenblatt, Louis

Unmarried

Res. 2164 Caton Avenue

Bus. 353 Fifth Avenue

Proposed by Jacob Heidenberg



## RABBI LEVINTHAL'S PUBLIC ADDRESSES

In addition to the many local affairs and meetings which he has recently addressed, Rabbi Levinthal has, in the past few weeks, made a number of notable addresses at important functions in Jewish life.

On Sunday evening, March 27th, he was the speaker at the opening Rally of Hebrew Week, sponsored by the Histadrut Ivrit of America, at the Technical High School, New York.

On Thursday afternoon, March 31st, he delivered an address before the Federation of Jewish Women's Organizations of New York, at their annual Brooklyn Meeting held at our Center.

On Monday evening, April 4th, he lectured at the Forum of the Jewish Community Center in Bay Shore, Long Island.

On Sunday, April 10th, he addressed the annual Donor Luncheon of the Brooklyn League for Labor Palestine, at our Center.

On Sunday, April 24th, he was the speaker at the dinner, closing the all-day conference on "How to Promote Better Understanding of the Jew and Judaism," at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.

On Monday, April 25th, he addressed the annual meeting of the Palestine Lighthouse—the Home of the Jewish Blind in Palestine—in New York.

On Monday night, May 9th, he was the principal speaker at the Banquet of the United Synagogue of America at their Silver Jubilee Convention held in Chicago.

On Thursday evening, May 19th, he delivered an address at the dinner celebrating the laying of the cornerstone of the Palestine Exhibit at the World's Fair, which was held in the Fair Grounds in Flushing.

On Sunday evening, May 22nd, Rabbi Levinthal addressed the convention of the Westchester Region of the Zionist Organization at Mt. Vernon.

## SABBATH SERVICES

Kindling of candles at 8:02 o'clock.  
Friday evening services at 6:20 and 7:30 o'clock.

Sabbath morning services, Parsha Behukotai, will commence at 8:45. Rabbi Levinthal will preach on the portion of the law.

Class in Ein Yaakov under the leadership of Mr. Benjamin Hirsh at 5 P.M.

Mincha services at 6:05 o'clock.

## HENRY SEINFEL 70 YEARS OLD MAY 28th



Henry Seinfel

The seventieth birthday of Mr. Henry Seinfel, first vice-president of the Center, will be celebrated on Saturday, May 28th.

The Center extends to Mr. Seinfel its hearty felicitations on this occasion together with its best wishes for many more years of health, happiness, and contentment.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GIFTS TO THE LIBRARY

We gratefully acknowledge receipt of gifts to the Center library from the following:

Mr. Jacob S. Doner  
Mrs. Bessie Deutschman  
Mr. Hans Van Holdt

## Important Notice

The officers of the Center appeal to members who have not as yet paid their membership dues for the current year to please mail their checks at their earliest possible convenience.

Upon receipt of payment, 1938 membership cards will be forwarded. These cards are required for admission to all functions in the Center building.

## PERSONALS

Best wishes for a speedy recovery are extended to Mr. Louis N. Jaffe.

Mr. Emanuel Edelstein, one of the teachers at the Center Hebrew School, was elected president of the Teachers Union.

Jerome Kurshan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Oscar Kurshan of 583 Crown Street, has been elected president of the Coltonal mathematics honor fraternity. He has also been elected to the Executive Board of the Debating Council.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL CLOSING EXERCISES THIS SUNDAY MORNING

The Sunday School of our Center will hold its formal closing exercises this Sunday morning in the auditorium of our building at 10:45 promptly. The children will assemble at the regular hour—10 o'clock in their classrooms, to receive their marks and final instructions and will then march to the assembly hall.

Rabbi Lewittes, the principal of our Sunday School, will take charge of the program that has been arranged and will announce the list of honor students and promotions in all the classes. The children of the graduating class will also receive their diplomas at this assembly.

## DAILY SERVICES

Morning services at 7 and 8 o'clock.  
Mincha services at 8:00 o'clock.

## IN MEMORIAM

It is with deep regret that we announce the death of one of the founders of the institution, first president of the Center, and an honorary member of the Board of Trustees

## Louis Cohen

of 275 Central Park West, who passed away on Monday, May 23rd.

To the family of the deceased and to all his friends and relatives, the Brooklyn Jewish Center extends its most heartfelt condolence.

## UNVEILING OF AMER MONUMENT

Members of the Brooklyn Jewish Center are invited to attend the unveiling of the monument of the late Mr. Harry Amer on Sunday, May 29th, at 2 P.M. at the Brooklyn Jewish Center subdivision of the Montefiore Cemetery, Springfield, L. I.

**COCKTAIL PARTY and  
MOONLIGHT DANCE**  
on the  
**ROOF**  
**FOR MEMBERS and ESCORTS**  
of the  
**YOUNG FOLKS LEAGUE**  
Thursday Evening, June 2nd  
8:30 o'clock  
♦  
**ALL YOU CAN DRINK!**  
**Admission 35c**



## A NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE TALMUD

(Continued from page 16)

But this mighty treasure of wisdom has, alas, become a closed book to many—or shall we say to most?—of our people. It is to the great credit of British Jewry that it has undertaken to open this closed book. For the first time, the contents of the Talmud are to be made available to all intelligent readers, Jewish and Gentile alike, in a reliable and definite English rendering, without omission and without abridgment. The work is being published by the Soncino Press in London, a firm which already has to its credit the publication of notable studies in Jewish literature, and which is known for the superb craftsmanship in printing and binding which it has developed. The entire translation is sponsored by the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, the Very Rev. Dr. J. H. Hertz. It is under the supervision of the Editor-in-Chief, Rabbi Dr. Isidore Epstein, a Talmudic scholar of great reputation, who has surrounded himself with a group of five Rabbinic experts.

It is to be hoped that the Jews of America will appreciate this great achievement. If the Hebrew and Aramaic text of the Talmud have become sealed books to them, let them now open the pages of this English translation and learn to appreciate those teachings that helped to preserve, to mould and to develop Jewish life. It should be the pride and glory of a Jewish home to adorn its shelves with these volumes, from which not only the Jews but all the world, can learn so much of what is noblest and purest in life.

## THE JEWISH CONGRESS ELECTIONS

(Continued from page 4)

the Jewish community by the backdoor of philanthropy.

It is important, moreover, to observe that Jewry is making a remarkable display of unity by means of the elections. Individualistic as the Jew often is, in times of need he can work shoulder to shoulder with his fellow Jew. Diverse though their personal interests may be, American Jews all see the present necessity for intelligent, concerted action to meet the onslaughts of the foes of humanity and civilization. With fervent and zealous

hearts they are assembling themselves together to give effect to their common ideals, aspirations and beliefs. They are pointing out that they have fundamentally an abiding faith in the righteousness and strength of their cause. They are demonstrating that Judaism is not a heterogeneous mass of conflicting elements but an entity capable of feeling and acting as a whole in an intelligent manner.

No one can afford to keep himself aloof from this public demonstration. Indifference to the cause of the American Jewish Congress will only deepen the despair and torture of Jewry.

In his affliction Job said, "I know that my redeemer liveth." Job was certain of one fact—of the existence of his redeemer. Very significantly the Hebrew word he used for redeemer is *Goel*, which also means kinsman. In his prophetic vision he foretold that the nearest of his kin—his brother—was to be a redeemer. The achievement of redemption is to be effected by the *Goel*—the kinsman—by our brothers—by ourselves. Literally, our redemption depends on ourselves — on the exercise of our own will. We must become the instrument through which there will be effected our own redemption. "When thou wilt not hide thyself from thine own flesh then shall thy light break forth as a dawn and thy cure will spring forth speedily."

Crippled, tormented, distracted world Jewry is looking to us for support and encouragement. The cause of Israel is being tried in the presence of civilization. Shall we fail to respond to the great call of history? It is the sacred duty of every Jew who loves his people, who loves liberty and justice, to unite in the great undertaking now before us.

Let us turn our large capacity into a new and preserving effort. We will yet be the rejoicing witnesses to the fall of iniquity and to the enthronement of reason and justice. We pray that the Jews of America may emerge in triumph from their supreme test.

## ROOF DANCE

arranged by the  
**HAKOACH CLUB**  
of the  
Brooklyn Jewish Center

THURS. EVENING, JUNE 23rd

Tickets of Admission Now on Sale at  
35c per person - 50c per couple

MY ONLY STORE  
**Hyman Spitz Inc.**  
FLORIST & FRUITERER  
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WEDDING  
DECORATIONS  
OUR SPECIALTY

We Carry A Complete  
Line of

**Fruit Baskets**

for every occasion

THE BROOKLYN JEWISH  
CENTER'S OFFICIAL  
FLORIST

TELEPHONE DICKENS 2-4000



## THE MARTYR AKIBA

*(Continued from page 14)*

tation and interpretation.<sup>26</sup> Akiba is not to be classified as a follower of the school of Shammai or of Hillel, for he was a school by himself. He was an independent thinker and logician, basing his conclusions on his own formulated principles. Unlike his teacher, R. Eliezer, who would never dare to nullify or re-interpret a law established by the sages of the preceding generations, Akiba changed a number of fixed laws, being more lenient or more strict, as his principles would dictate.<sup>27</sup>

Next in importance to his systematization and development of the Halakah, was Akiba's theological system, or religious philosophy. Akiba marked out a path of rabbinic Judaism for almost two thousand years. According to Akiba, man was created after an image, or philosophically speaking, after an Idea.<sup>28</sup>

He protested against any comparison of God with the angels,<sup>29</sup> and thus lowered the angels somewhat to the realms of mortals.<sup>30</sup> Against the Judaeo-Gnostic doctrine, he insists that not even the angels can see God's glory.<sup>31</sup> The chief and greatest principle of Judaism is the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."<sup>32</sup> But Akiba does not maintain thereby that the observance of this command is equivalent to the observing of the whole Torah. He is therefore, against the view that Judaism is "simply morality."<sup>33</sup> Akiba, like his colleague, Ishmael, brooked no compromise with the heretics who by the process of allegorical interpretation threw all allegiance to the Torah. He thus emphasized the importance of religious ceremonies.<sup>34</sup> He interpreted a number of Scriptural verses against the doctrines of Christianity,<sup>35</sup> and he attacked the practices of Hellenistic Christians whenever occasion arose.<sup>36</sup>

Akiba was an extremely strict and national Jew. He was an exclusionist regarding Israel's relation to God for whose sake the Jews are willing to undergo martyrdom and whom they love unto death.<sup>37</sup> According to Akiba, Israel's fate is interwoven with, and dependent upon, the study of the Torah. The Jews will be victorious and safe when they follow the standard of the Torah.<sup>38</sup> Israel in addition should always be guided and led by their leaders, or people of experience. Just as the fowl cannot fly without wings,

so Israel cannot live without their elders.<sup>39</sup> The Song of Songs was for Akiba the holiest book in the last division of Scripture, the song of union between God and Israel. His optimism and strong faith in the Jewish people and in their future bliss he expressed on a number of occasions, especially when his colleagues would feel greatly discouraged as they noticed the ruins of the Judean State and contrasted them with the prosperity of the Roman empire.<sup>40</sup> He also encouraged non-Jews to become converts to Judaism.<sup>41</sup>

The Torah is the source of life of the individual.<sup>42</sup> Akiba proved this doctrine by his own diligence in the study of the Torah. With the exception of the days preceding Passover and the Day of Atonement, he would never remark, during the academic sessions, that a session was over.<sup>43</sup> When his son was dying Akiba did not interrupt the sessions.<sup>44</sup> In one of the debates between Akiba and Tarphan at the Academy of Lydda, the entire Academy held with Akiba that the study of the Torah is more essential than to occupy oneself with meritorious deeds, for studying leads eventually to right living.<sup>45</sup>

Akiba's doctrine regarding the Messiah was realistic and thoroughly Jewish. The future world, to distinguish it from the Messianic period, will come, to be sure, after the destruction of the world.<sup>46</sup> To the future world, with a few exceptions, all generations of Israel, i.e. all the righteous, will be admitted.<sup>47</sup> Akiba, furthermore, emphasizes the doctrine of the freedom of the will, to which he allows no limitations.<sup>48</sup> He refuted the Christian doctrine of the grace of God contingent upon faith in Christ and baptism in the following statement: "Happy are ye, O Israelites, that ye purify yourselves through your heavenly Father, as it is said, 'Israel's hope is God'."<sup>49</sup>

Akiba was very likely opposed to the theological doctrine of "Zekut Abot": "Man lives by observing the word of God, and not by the merits of the Patriarchs."<sup>50</sup> He was the first tanna to give a philosophical interpretation of history. According to Akiba, the events that have taken place in human history would have occurred even if the personalities involved had not appear-

ed on the scene. God needs certain characters to execute His will.<sup>51</sup>

God combines goodness and mercy with strict justice.<sup>52</sup> The pious are punished in this life for their few sins in order that in the next they may receive only reward, while the wicked attain in this world all the recompense for the little good they have done, and in the next world will receive only punishment for their wickedness.<sup>53</sup>

There are four kinds of attitudes towards suffering in the world.<sup>54</sup> But man should always be grateful to God, whether his lot is one of suffering or that of happiness,<sup>55</sup> and one should always be accustomed to saying: "Whatever God doeth He doeth for the best." The following story illustrates well this maxim, which Akiba had been taught by Nahum of Gimzo: Once being unable to find any sleeping accommodations in a certain town, Akiba passed the night outside its walls. He resigned himself to this hardship, even when a lion devoured his ass, and a cat killed the cock whose crowing was to announce the dawn to him, and the wind extinguished his candle. All that Akiba remarked was, "This, too, must be for a good reason!" When morning dawned he learned that a band of robbers had attacked the town and carried its inhabitants into captivity. He had escaped because he had not been noticed in the darkness, and neither beast, nor fowl, nor light, had betrayed him.<sup>56</sup>

God's measure of goodness in the world is proportionally greater than His measure of punishment.<sup>57</sup> Goodness and modesty are favorite themes with Akiba, and he reverts to them again and again. He would see mainly the good in man, and thus defend often the good name of individuals or families of questionable character.<sup>58</sup> Akiba helped untiringly the poor and scholarly.<sup>59</sup> He himself filled the office of an overseer of the poor,<sup>60</sup> and he always glorified charitable acts.<sup>61</sup>

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*(Continued on page 23)*



## CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS AND THE JEWS

*(Continued from page 6)*

Jewish nature. His writings were strongly influenced by the Biblical style; he was fond of quoting from the Prophets and preferred to read the Bible or the writings of Jewish authors; he himself wrote a book of prophecies, and his mystical signature was devised from an ancient Hebrew formula. In his will, Columbus left a small legacy to a Jew, and Jews were among his first sponsors and benefactors. It is known that he entertained Messianic illusions, and considered himself a messenger of Jehovah. Like the Jews, he was a man of strange contrasts and unusual contradictions. He was endowed with the imagination of a dreamer and the avarice of a merchant; he could be audacious at times and overprudent at others. This celebrated conqueror of a glorious new land could bargain with the petty obstinacy of the lowliest trader. Lastly, he had a fresh complexion, fair hair and an aquiline nose—characteristics typical of southern Jews of the time.

Like thousands of Jews in those days, Columbus was a master in the art of dissimulation. It was his only possible means of protecting himself and of saving his great dream from failure. The eyes of the Inquisition were directed on just such conversos, or backsliders, as he. To elude suspicion, he not only changed his name and concealed his origin, but wrapped himself in the mantle of Christian piety to conform to the scruples of a fanatical queen. Hence, his ingenious tactics in concealing the facts of his Jewish lineage by the use of theological terms and phrases which he never meant. "This man," says Maurice David, was not inspired in a dream by the Holy Trinity, in which he never believed." Columbus had frequently professed his devout belief in the Trinity, which he deemed an excellent screen for "the real source of his 'inspiration'." Neither should one be misguided, David continues, "by the command to his heirs and the heirs of his heirs to have a mass said for his soul and his parents' soul, and to have a church erected in 'Espanola' for the Indian savages, nor even by the provision to educate young priests to guide and convert the aborigines into good Christians."

\* \* \*

Christopher Columbus counted many

Jews among his friends; but they were even more to him than friends. They were his patrons, his teachers; they assisted him in his poverty, and they prepared the way which was to make his discovery possible. The science of astronomy was revered above all other sciences by the mariners of Columbus' day. Astronomical tables were regarded as their most priceless possession, for it was through the use of such tables that navigators were enabled to determine the course of the sun, the moon and the stars and to chart, thereby, the path of their voyages. It was the Jew, Abraham Zacutto, a celebrated scientist and a teacher at the University of Salamanca, who compiled the astronomical tables which Columbus always used. Zacutto's tables enjoyed such great popularity among sea-faring men of the time that they had to be translated from the original Hebrew into Latin and were studied with the greatest of care for their nautical value. Whether on land or on sea, Columbus always carried these tables with him. His diaries contain many a curious reference to them and include a rather humorous story in which he tells how Zacutto's tables helped to save his life.

Before Columbus appeared at the court of Spain with his fantastic dream of searching out a new route to India, he had already sought the aid of the King of Portugal in this project. Although covetous of the wealth and power that trade with Asia would bring, nevertheless, the King thought the sailor's plans much too extravagant to take them seriously. After long and fruitless negotiations, Columbus left the country disheartened and disappointed. Portugal lacked the vision and understanding to sympathize with his great ideal; thus the benefit of his discovery was destined to go to her rival across the border.

It was at the Portuguese court that Don Isaac Abarbanel and Christopher Columbus, the one a great personage and Minister of Finance, the other an impecunious dreamer endowed with an unshakable determination, probably met for the first time. It is not known how well they came to know each other at the time, but when they parted, neither of them could have foreseen that they were to meet again soon under vastly changed circumstances.

As though to make their second meeting even more impressive, Abarbanel and Columbus arrived in Spain at the very same time, in the year 1484. One came as a fugitive, in need of rest and peace; the other, as an adventurer, seeking fame and fortune. Abarbanel brought with him his unfinished commentaries, Columbus his vision of the splendor and opulence of the East. Both were members of the same race, struggling against the common enemies of poverty and prejudice, of ingratitude and the jealousy of high officials. But how different the paths they were to take!

Columbus could not have arrived in Spain at a more inopportune moment. Dreams so remote and doubtful as discovery call for leisure and resources, but just as that time, the foreign and domestic affairs of the nation absorbed all the energy and attention of its rulers. The Inquisition and the war with Granada had exhausted whatever moral and spiritual strength Spain possessed. Neither the throne nor the church would allow the enthusiasm of the people to be diverted from these projects. Columbus' undertaking promised greater wealth than Granada could offer and many more infidels than all the Jews and Moors in Spain, on whom the monarchs might practice their holy zeal. But Ferdinand was sceptical and Isabella coolly indifferent.

Although Columbus was insistent and pressed his case with annoying boldness, the rulers remained apathetic and referred his claim to a commission of scholars, composed chiefly of ecclesiastics. This was their convenient way of disposing of an uncomfortable nuisance. Fernando de Telavera, confessor to the queen, a man of but little imagination, became head of the council. The findings of this group of pious men were a foregone conclusion. For the second time, and after long and weary waiting, Columbus was doomed to disappointment. He was informed that in the opinion of the commission, his scheme was found to be "vain, impracticable, and resting on grounds too weak to permit the support of the government."

\* \* \*

The story of Queen Isabella's pawned jewels is one of the pretty fictions of history. The matter was not quite as romantic as that. After his rebuff, Columbus was on the point of leaving Spain to seek others more congen-



ial to his dream when a number of Jews and Marranos, whose foresight proved keener than that of their sovereigns, interceded in his behalf. Don Isaac Abarbanel was the leader of this group. He had previously met Christopher Columbus and had been impressed by his tenacity of purpose. Though Abarbanel was not a scientist and could not examine the details of the navigator's plan, he had faith in its feasibility. Unfortunately, he had not been able to assist Columbus in Portugal, but here in Spain he was surrounded by many wealthy and influential coreligionists and Marranos. Thus Abarbanel became one of the earliest and most enthusiastic supporters of Christopher Columbus.

It was not the hope of enriching himself or even his friends that induced Abarbanel to rally to the support of the explorer's project. No, it was rather his fear for the welfare of his people in Spain, which was each day becoming more critical, that impelled him to encourage the voyage. For ten years now, the Inquisition had been wreaking its awful spite and was daily becoming bolder and more unrestrained. It was no longer a question of the safety of the Marranos, but that of the whole Jewish population. Rumors of their impending expulsion were rife. Indeed, Torquemada had made no attempt to conceal his conspiracy. He boasted of it openly. Abarbanel, who was close to the ruling circles, knew that the edict of banishment, though not yet proclaimed, was awaiting only the signature of the queen to become effective.

Although the lands Columbus hoped to discover would automatically become Spanish possessions, Abarbanel was confident that conditions would be more favorable to the Jews on this far-distant soil than here in their native Spain. Sicily likewise belonged to the crown, yet there the hand of the oppressor was not so ruthless.

Columbus was unyielding in his demands. As the price of his explorations, he claimed a tenth of any profit that might result therefrom both for himself and for his heirs after him. But his further insistence on having nothing less than vice-regency over the new territories which were to be found was of much greater importance to the Jews. For with Columbus as virtual ruler, their hopes for security might be boundless.

There was every possibility that the

extravagant demands of the navigator would terminate the negotiations just as they were about to be concluded. The elation of the monarchs over the surrender of Granada had now inclined them more favorably toward Columbus. To excite their enthusiasm, he had fantastically pictured the barbaric wealth and splendor of India, and had elaborated on the prospect of extending the empire of the Cross over these benighted lands. The visionary halo he cast over the project had already captivated the imagination of both Ferdinand and Isabella, but his excessive terms aroused their displeasure.

Once again it seemed that Columbus would be compelled to turn from Spain to seek aid at some other court. The head-strong sailor was determined to fail rather than relinquish any of his claims. It was then that Columbus' Jewish patrons, notably Don Isaac Abarbanel and Luis de Santangel, the latter a rich and influential Marrano, hastened to plead his cause before the queen. They dwelled on the wealth and glory that lay within her reach; they pointed out the insignificance of the splendors of Granada as compared to the fabulous opulence of the lands beyond the seas. Although it was true that the royal treasury had been almost exhausted and that there was no gold available for so costly an enterprise, they offered to finance the whole venture from their own personal fortunes. At last they succeeded in inducing the queen to sanction the voyage. Columbus was even then some distance from Granada. A royal messenger was dispatched to overtake him and to bring him word that all his requests had been granted and that an order had already been given to equip a fleet for the undertaking.

In the account books of Garcia Martinez and Pedro de Montemayor, bearing the date, May 5, 1492, there is an entry of an order issued by the King on his treasurers to pay to Don Isaac Abarbanel the sum of 1,500,000 maravedes for monies which he loaned to their Majesties in the Moorish wars, and additional sum of 1,140,000 maravedes for the sums he advanced to equip the caravels ordered by their Majesties for the expedition to the Indies and to pay Christopher Columbus, the admiral of the fleet. Similar orders of payment were issued in favor of Luis de Santangel. Though it may seem incredible, it was this Jew, Don Isaac Abarbanel, who, together with his Jewish and Marrano friends at the

Spanish court, had the vision and courage to assume responsibility for one of the most daring enterprises known to history. While the evil Torquemada was hatching new plans and fomenting fresh conspiracies for the humiliation and destruction of these very people, Abarbanel risked his own fortune and the fortune of his friends on an undertaking that was destined to make Spain, for a time, one of the proudest and most powerful countries in Europe.

## SOURCE MATERIAL

(Continued from page 5)

asserted that his undertaking was mainly in the interest of the Church; that he desired to disseminate Christianity in the newly discovered lands; and that with the gold found in the ancient and much-renowned Ophir, the Holy Sepulchre could be wrested from the infidels."

—"Christopher Columbus," by M. Kayserling, Longman, Green.

"On all of these thirteen intimate letters (of Christopher Columbus to his son Don Diego in Madrid) but one, the attentive reader can plainly see at the left top corner a little monogram which may seem cryptic to him, but which, is in fact, nothing more nor less than an old Hebrew greeting or benediction, frequently used among religious Jews all over the world even to this day . . . I repeat, the mystic signature in the shape of a triangle, considered by Colon as his own family emblem, is nothing less than an abbreviation of the 'last confession' of the Jews and also a substitute for the Kaddish—in lieu of the real Kaddish, which was interdicted. The abbreviation in this case should read:

.S.	ש.
.S.A.S.	ש. א. ש.
.X.M.Y.	י. מ. ח.
X.p.o.ferens	נושא ע. פ. ח.
Shadai, Shadai	שדי
Adonoy Shadai	שדי אדני שדי
Yehova molai	
chesed	יהוה מלא חסד
Nauthai ovon,	נשא עון, פשע, חטאה
pesha, chatuo	

"I think that the aforesaid proofs are more than enough to convince the most skeptical that Christopher Colon, the discoverer of the Americas, was a Jew and remained all his life true to the religion of his ancestors."

—Maurice David, "Who Was 'Columbus'?" The Research Pub. Co., N.Y.



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